

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Finance, Policy and Resources
DATE	26 September 2013
ACTING DIRECTOR	Paul Fleming
TITLE OF REPORT	Telephone systems and mobile devices for private usage
REPORT NUMBER:	CG/13/100

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report proposes the replacement of the existing policy on the use by employees of the Council's telephone systems for private calls with a set of guidance, which also covers the use of mobile devices for private calls and digital messaging.

2. RECOMMENDATION(S)

The Committee is requested to:

- a) Approve the replacement of the existing policy on the use by employees of the Council's telephone systems for private calls with a set of guidance, which also covers the use of mobile devices for private calls and digital messaging.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

None

5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES

The last review of the policy was in August 2007. Since then there have been several changes in technology in the Council such as the introduction of mobiles, smart phones and other mobile devices which now require to be reflected in the document, as well as the need for it to cover digital messaging as well as phone calls.

The main changes to the document have been as follows:-

- The policy has been converted to a set of management and employee guidance (with a short policy statement retained under 1) to allow for more flexibility in its application.
- There is mention that it now covers private digital messaging as well as phone calls and includes Council mobiles/smart phones and other mobile devices as well as land lines/extensions.
- There has been an amendment to section 4.2 of the document on call logging, with the list of Council establishments where the call logging facility is available having been removed, with details now to be placed on the Zone (or available from line managers). This list will be more easily maintained and kept up-to-date by the ICT service, without the need for regular updates to the guidance.
- There has been an addition to section 4.2 indicating that the Council also receives usage details of all mobiles/smart phones and other mobile devices for calls and messaging from providers.
- There has been an amendment to section 5 to indicate that if further monitoring reports are required of outgoing private calls, in addition to the standard monthly report Directorates receive showing the top 50 external numbers called in each, these can be supplied by ICT on request by a third tier manager or above.
- There have been some necessary terminology changes/amendments.

The ICT Service was consulted to verify current practice regarding call logging and monitoring to ensure that up-to-date arrangements were reflected in the guidance.

6. IMPACT

The impact of these changes to the document will be minor, being concerned mainly with updates to reflect technology changes and to cover digital messaging including texting. The main parts of the document remain unchanged, although it is now guidance (with a short policy statement retained) rather than a policy.

An Equality and Human Rights Impact Assessment has been compiled in respect of the proposals in this report, with no negative equality implications identified.

7. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS

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GUIDANCE ON THE USE BY EMPLOYEES OF THE COUNCIL'S TELEPHONE SYSTEMS FOR PRIVATE CALLS AND OF MOBILE DEVICES FOR PRIVATE CALLS AND DIGITAL MESSAGING

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 It is the Council's policy to discourage the regular use, by employees, of its telephone systems, including mobiles/smart phones and other mobile devices, for making private telephone calls, and other forms of digital messaging (including texting). However, in the event that private calls or digital messages have to be made the Council shall not charge employees for these calls or messages, unless the usage is excessive.
- 1.2 Usage, in terms of cost and time spent on private calls, messaging and texting, however, will be monitored and any abuse of this guidance could result in disciplinary action.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council has invested heavily in telephone systems and facilities, including mobile/smart phones and other mobile devices, to ensure that efficient and high quality services are provided to the general public.
- 2.2 It is recognised that any practices which reduce public access to services should be minimised and where possible avoided. However, it is also accepted that there may be the occasional need for an employee, either to make or receive private calls or messages, using the Council's facilities.
- 2.3 It is also recognised that the telephone systems, operating in the various Council facilities, are not identical and do not provide the same degree of information in relation to, for example, call logging and call activity. This guidance provides a framework for managers and employees, on the use of all Council telephones for private calls and messages (both outgoing and incoming), as well as detailing the procedure to be followed where call logging is in operation.
- 2.4 It is further recognised that a degree of mutual trust between the Council and its employees is required in order for this guidance to operate effectively.
- 2.5 Further guidance on user responsibilities' regarding mobile/portable devices, which includes phones and smartphones can be found on the Zone.

3. Circumstances under which it is permissible to make or receive a private telephone call or send a message, during, or outwith, normal working hours



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- 3.1 All Council employees should, wherever practicable, avoid or minimise the use of any of the Council's telecommunications networks, including mobiles/smart phones and other mobile devices, for private calls or messages. Where it is necessary to make or receive such calls or messages, these should, wherever possible, take place at periods of low workload and when it is least likely to inconvenience the public or Council employees in other services. In addition, the time spent on such calls or messages should be kept to a minimum.
- 3.2 In the case of an employee working abroad who requires to use a Council mobile/smart phone or other mobile device to make a personal call, this is only permitted on a limited basis where the call is regarded as being essential e.g. concerned with the illness of a relative.
- 3.3 Only in exceptional circumstances should an employee make a private call or send a digital message from a telephone line/extension, mobile/smart phone or other mobile device, which is not normally assigned for their use.

4. Guidance for managers and employees at Council sites where call logging is in operation

- 4.1. The telephone systems at various Council establishments are linked to the corporate telephone network, which is administered centrally by the ICT Service.
- 4.2. It is possible to monitor and report on private usage at many of these establishments, via the call logging facility. A list of the establishments where this can be done is on the Zone or available from line managers. The Council also receives usage of all mobiles/smart phones and other mobile devices for calls and messaging from the provider.
- 4.3. For employees, working at locations where private usage can be monitored and reported, if they are required to make a private call, they **must** follow the procedure detailed below:

4.3.1. Local and National (calls with a dialling code other than 01224) Calls

Where it is necessary to make an outgoing local or national call, the code # 8000, followed by a 9 for an outside line, should be keyed-in by the employee, before the receiver's number is dialled.

The call logging equipment will then identify the extension from which the call has been made, the receiver's number, duration and cost of the call.

It should be noted that a restriction has been placed on the use of all premium



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service numbers e.g. 0891 and 0898. If an employee needs to call such a number, in the course of their business activities, then contact may be made via the telephone operators, by dialling zero.

4.3.2. International Calls

If an employee needs to make a private international call, prior approval must be sought from his/her line manager. The line manager will then make arrangements, through the ICT Service to have any dialling restriction lifted from the employee's extension, for the duration of the call.

As with local and national calls, the employee **must** key-in the code # 8000, followed by a 9 for an outside line, before the receiver's number is dialled. The Council's call logging facility will again record the extension from which the call was made, the receiver's number, duration and cost of the call.

5. Monitoring outgoing private telephone calls

- 5.1. Where applicable, the ICT Service, via the call logging facility, will produce a report showing the top 50 external numbers dialled in each Directorate, for extensions that are monitored, showing duration and cost of calls. This list will be provided, on a monthly basis, and will allow Heads of Service to quickly determine the level of usage. Further reports can be supplied on request by a third tier manager or above, through contacting the Head of Customer Service and Performance, highlighting all calls made from any specified extension or from a mobile/smart phone or other mobile device.
- 5.2. It will be each Head of Service's responsibility to monitor the private use of all the Council's telephone systems and where it is deemed to be excessive, to take the appropriate remedial action.
- 5.3. ICT will also monitor, and report, as a corporate indicator, usage in terms of duration and cost to the Council, of private calls made by employees.

6. Other telephone systems

- 6.1. Where other telephone systems, which do not have a sophisticated call logging facility, are in use (including Council mobiles/smart phones and other mobile devices) employees are required to maintain a log of all private calls made, detailing the number dialled and duration of calls. The same is the case for messages. This log may be scrutinised, at any time, on request by the relevant Head of Service.



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7. Unauthorised use by employees of the telecommunications systems or disregard of this guidance

7.1. All employees are to operate within this guidance in regard to making, or receiving private calls and digital messages. Where an employee has disregarded this guidance or is deemed to have made excessive or unnecessary use of the Council's telephone systems, including mobiles/smart phones or mobile devices, for private calls or messages, it will be deemed to be a matter which may be subject to the Council's Disciplinary Procedure.

8. Review of this guidance

8.1. Human Resources will periodically review this guidance. It will, nevertheless, be subject to continual review and amendment in the light of experience of its operation and employment best practice. Changes will only be put into effect following the normal consultation arrangements.

9. Unfair treatment

9.1 If an employee feels he/she has been treated unfairly in terms of this guidance, he/she has the right to raise this under the Council's Managing Grievances policy/procedure.